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**IN OTHER NEWS**

**Where are all the people?**

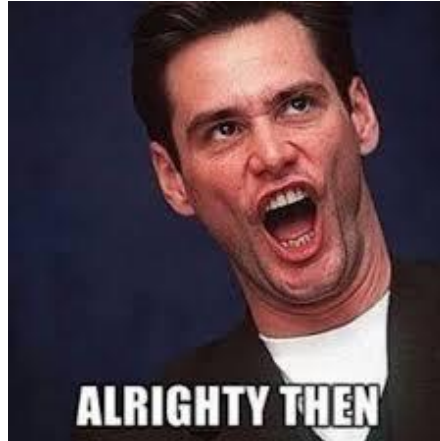


There has been talk about the looming shortage of plumbers gasfitters and drainlayers and we have shown in the main column how many registered tradespeople we have but also we have shown how many we don't have.

One point in the main column was the fact that numbers of tradespeople per head population is decreasing which for some is good news, as there should be more work for those who remain in the industry - but is there more work?

The numbers speak for themselves that licensed practitioner numbers are dropping so there should be more work as the population numbers are rising but we just don't see evidence of the increase in work which poses the question - where is the work and if it does exist

**Beyond Belief**



The article last week got a lot of response from gasfitters, but one in particular summarised the general feelings of a lot in the industry regarding how the entire process and resulting scheme was unbelievable.

**Dear Editor**

With regard to your comments last week on the gas certification system, I believe the bureaucrats got hold of what was a perfectly good gas certification system and decided to "tinker" with it in the mistaken hope that they would save the public a few dollars in administrative costs (certification charges).

Now we have a system with numerous problems that do nothing for the safety of the public or the tradespeople.

Anyone can download a copy of the template for a COC or GSC or combined COC GSC. You could make your own certificate, hell the guy who is masquerading as a gasfitter can have a field day producing false certificates – and you know what? No one would know until something goes wrong.

All gas certificates used to be available on the PGDB website – so any member of the public, any gasfitter, any real estate agent, any manufacturer checking on a warranty – could put in the address and if there was a certificate, it would come up. Buying a house? Got gas appliances in it?

You could check and see if it was all legitimate. It was easy. Now only high-risk stuff is put on the ESS database, which is not anywhere near as easy to locate and it does not show new connections at all which are now considered "general" risk.

Gasfitters are doing gas certificates, and then re-entering information into the ESS database (so effectively doing the job twice). There is still quite a lot of confusion around how to correctly fill these in as well, with some confusion around the class of risk.

There was discussion at the beginning of this process around cost – gasfitters can access the certificates for free now, whereas before they paid \$25. We don't believe the charges to the public have

then who is doing it?

The licensing numbers indicate there are thousands of practitioners who could license but haven't. We can't be expected to believe that they are not working in the industry and have all just up sticks and left to move on to other things.

The Federation is quite firm on the stance of "get legal or get out" where the only exceptions should be those that are in legal dispute with the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

A further question that arises from this situation is the amount of money being spent on training only to train people to leave. The qualification system has allowed an "out" for people at Licensing level.

When people take the option of the "out", it is literally money and time down the drain for the industry. The industry should be selecting those who want to be in the industry and creating conditions that encourage people to stay.

Creating an environment where people are proud to be part of the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying Industry has to begin with trust and belief in the direction of those regulating the industry.

An environment must be created where people trust the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board but unfortunately, this trust has taken some huge hits over the last couple of

dropped at all, and in many cases, they have increased due to additional time taken.

The system is hardly a success and is a real example of how the "suits" took over the process and made a complete cock up of it, how they thought they knew what was better for industry - and in this case the public too - when clearly it wasn't and has resulted in an inferior product, less assurances for the public and a system with problems you could drive a Kenworth truck through.

The baby was well and truly thrown out with the bath water - and we are still scratching our heads trying to figure out why.

**ED:**

Alrighty then not much can be added to that! We agree with the writer and it certainly appears the system was conceived and implemented in a comfortable office by people dressed in corporate uniform whose understanding of the situation stopped at the budget savings.

You would have noticed that they are now pushing harder on the enforcement side of gas certification. This is the bureaucrat's way of ensuring the success of what they have implemented by simply forcing the tradepeople to comply with threats of punishment if they don't.

Remember the Auditor General's Office stated forced compliance doesn't work and what makes it even worse is if people don't understand the system and can't get answers to questions. Talking to those in the industry the feedback we get is that there are less certificates being submitted than there was before but only Energy Safety and the Board would have the figures to compare.

We are very confident that if the before and after figures were compared and there were less certificates being submitted that blame would be laid squarely with the gasfitters not the system, enforcement would then be used to force compliance.

Remember the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board went through a period using the same tactics and look at the damage it did to the industry.

If legislation is appropriate and addressing a problem then it is generally accepted by all, but when the reasons are not clear and the processes are not logical then people reject the legislation and often look for ways to avoid it.

The only thing that is saving the industry from more issues with regard to occupational licensing and the review of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 is the inefficiency of bureaucracy.

Why blame the tradespeople for everything that goes wrong? - Simply because we sit back and take it and there is always someone looking for an angle that they can benefit from the demise of the practitioners.

decades.

The responsibility for renewing the trust in the Board is not theirs alone but also falls on the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and the Minister of Building and Housing as they have all contributed to the demise of the industry – and yes the industry needs to step up as well.

The industry needs to spend more time ensuring compliance not thinking of ways to avoid it, but to do so we need to have legislation and regulations that we believe in, that is affordable, that is sensible, fair and equitable.

It is all very well the Government saying we need more apprentices but why waste money on only partially training apprentices? What we need are highly trained tradespeople to encourage the apprentices to do well in the industry backed by consistent training nationwide.

It seems that all that has happened over recent years is that more responsibility and cost was placed on the practitioners. Practitioners have done as they were told or suffered the consequences. This has not created a supportive industry.

The Federation believes an environment has been created where practitioners don't want to take on apprentices due to all the hassles.

Nothing in this industry will change until the powers

## Licensing Update



A claim that you just wanted to help people won't wash with the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board so like it or not, it is your responsibility to make sure you are authorised to do sanitary plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying.

We have had a few people ask us how licensing is going this year so we asked the Board and they are very confident it is better than last year.

We thought we would run a few figures based on the Board's Public Register and decided the best way to see the state of play was to look at what percentage of registered practitioners on the register have licensed this year compared to this time in 2015.

·	Certifying Plumbers	2015	39.82%	2016	44.17%
·	Licensed Plumbers	2015	20.58%	2016	34.90%
·	Certifying Gasfitters	2015	46.63%	2016	54.59%
·	Licensed Gasfitters	2015	14.83%	2016	25.41%
·	Certifying Drainlayers	2015	30.45%	2016	34.03%
·	Licensed Drainlayers	2015	?	2016	54.27%

So looking at those figures the Board is probably right and there have been good percentage increases if compared to this time last year so congratulations!

That looks good, however when you take into account the percentage of people who could license each year but don't - it shows the poor condition the industry is in and why the skills shortage has come about. We have used the plumbing qualification as an example because it has been in the media in recent weeks.

Out of 6,757 people registered as Certifying Plumbers, only 2,985 have licensed. Out of 3,306 people registered as Licensed Plumbers, only 1,154 are licensed.

Gasfitting is interesting in that out of 1,185 people on the Register who could license as Licensed Gasfitters only 25.41% have chosen to do so, that's only 479 people.

On a National population, perspective in 2009 there was one licensed plumber to every 907 people where in 2015 there was one plumber to every 1,272 people. That's a 40.25% increase in people to plumbers.

In gasfitting in 2009, there was one licensed gasfitter to every 2,850 people where in 2015 there was one gasfitter to every 2,887 people. That's a 1.3% increase in people to gasfitters.

In drainlaying in 2009, there was one licensed drainlayer to every

that be recognise that the businesses and employers need help. They need to trust what is being done and support it.

In our opinion, combining the regulation of the plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry with trades in the construction sector will be very difficult.

In most instances, we are dealing with the health of the public and meeting their needs and this is a big difference to other trades who are dealing with the comforts of the public.

We believe we need an environment that will entice trained people back in to the industry to meet the skills shortage and give us the base to train apprentices appropriately.

1,116 people where in 2015 there was one drainlayer to every 1,997 people. That's a 79% increase in people to drainlayers.

The population in New Zealand is increasing by .72 % annually but as an industry our numbers per head of population are decreasing and it gets even worse for plumbing and drainlaying when we look a fully qualified people at Certifying level.

Certifying Plumbers in 2009, the ratio was one Certifying Plumber to every 1,210 people and in 2015; it was one Certifying Plumber to every 1,724 people.

Certifying Drainlayers in 2009, the ratio was one Certifying Drainlayer to every 1,116 people and in 2015; it was one Certifying Drainlayer to every 2,105 people.

Certifying Gasfitters in 2009, the ratio was one Certifying Gasfitters to every 4,247 people and in 2015; it was one Certifying Gasfitters to every 3,791 people.

If we take it a step further and look at it in total licensed qualifications in 2009, we get a ratio of one qualification to every 425 people and in 2015, it was one qualification to every 608 people.

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